

1608/3187

 *The great demand for the Essay in reply to the Rev. Mr. BUTLER'S pamphlet, which appeared in the FREEMAN'S JOURNAL of the 10th of February instant, signed PHILLO-CLERICUS, has induced the Printer to comply with the desire of many well-wishers of our happy Constitution, in republishing it.*

To the COMMITTEE for conducting the
FREE-PRESS.

AFTER the full investigation the Subject of Tithes has already received:—after the calumnies so industriously dispersed against the Clergy have been so ably refuted;—after the Clergy, in the public mind, are honorably acquitted of the inhuman crimes of rapacity, cruelty and oppression, with which they have been so frequently and so publicly charged; and after the result of every enquiry into their character and conduct not only redounds to their honour, but evidently proves them to be a class of men much injured in reputation and property, it must be thought unnecessary to say any thing farther on that subject.

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But there exists at present some concomitant circumstances, which neither ought or shall be passed over in silence. Among these may well be reckoned a letter signed James Butler, addressed to Lord Kenmare, published in a pamphlet, and afterwards circulated thro' the kingdom in some of our public prints.

The object of the writer is to shew that some conclusions deduced by my Lord Bishop of Cloyne from the Nuncio's letter of 1786, and from the oath taken by Popish Bishops previous to their consecration, are false. How far he has succeeded shall be the subject of this letter. Mr. Butler admits, that if the deductions of my Lord Bishop of Cloyne are well founded, the Roman Catholics cannot be entitled to the protection of a Protestant Government; but he denies the fact, and supports his assertion by alluding to a correspondence he has had on that subject with the Court of Rome. But I would ask this gentleman, can any correspondence he may please to engage in deprive men of the use of their reason? or can he produce any document or any papal official epistle that can convince any rational Protestant that a doctrine always considered as a tenet of the Church of Rome, openly avowed by the Pope's representative, and published with terms of rapturous panegyric by a Titular Bishop of Ireland, is not really an article of their belief?

But Mr. Butler says, that the Nuncio was afterwards concerned for having written that letter.

letter. Was it because he had altered his opinion? No, but sober reflection convinced him, that letters of that tendency published in a Protestant Government, where Popery existed only by a tolerant connivance, must necessarily not only withdraw from them every countenance and protection, but also for ever frustrate every effort to obtain a repeal of the penal Laws, which the mildness of Government gave them great reason to expect at the time. Mr. Butler, the author of the pamphlet, seemed well aware of these circumstances, and had by his own acknowledgment an antidote ready for the occasion. He, with those Gentlemen, whom he calls his suffragans, condemned his letter, and Burke's commendations of it, which condemnation they have now ready to produce. What became of this sentence these sixteen years past? It was confined to the breasts of the Popish Clergy alone, and the laity were to continue under the influence of an error which has notoriously been their predominant spring of action.

But supposing that such condemnation did actually take place, and that Mr. Butler and his suffragants were serious, and that they proceeded on the occasion without equivocation, &c. will any man presume to say, that the opinion of a few obscure Irish Popish Bishops will overthrow a principle which, as the Nuncio truly observes, was received in Popish countries, and sometimes asserted by the Court of Rome itself. To conceive such

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an idea must be ridiculous, and any man must have a pitiful opinion of the intellects of Protestants before he could attempt to obtrude such an absurdity on their belief.

But Mr. Butler has produced to the Primate, and to my Lord Pery, letters from the Court of Rome, approving of the conduct of himself and his suffragans, as he is pleased to stile them. I must own he has acted with wise precaution — *venienti occurrere morbo* is his motto. I see too much system not to doubt of his sincerity—if he is candid, let him produce the whole correspondence—then we will fairly see for what reasons, and upon what account, this approbation was obtained. We well know that an official letter, written for a particular purpose, will be couched in language adapted to the design, whatever may be the internal sentiments of the writer: it required very little penetration to foresee that this Nuncio's letter, with Burke's panegyric, must one day or other rise in judgment; therefore, required, that Mr. Butler should be armed at all points to sustain the shock. To do Mr. Butler justice, he has acted like a wise general, and may well use the words of Hector, *Si Pergama defendi possit etiam hac dextra defensa fuisset.*

Mr. Butler's explanation of the obnoxious part of a Popish Bishop's oath is extraordinary indeed. He either mistakes or misrepresents the meaning of the word *ordine*, which obviously means rank—so that *salvo meo ordine* must

must mean that due obedience will be paid to the Court of Rome, at the same time that Bishops, so swearing, will not sacrifice to the Pope the particular privileges annexed to their respective dioceses. These words Mr. Butler should know were artfully introduced into the oath when the Roman Pontiffs began to arrogate to themselves the favourite titles of universal supremacy and infallibility, and were calculated to render the new fangled oath more palatable and easy of digestion. I cannot see by what new construction Mr. Butler, or any other advocate for his cause, can interpret *ordine* in this passage, or indeed in any other, by the word *state*, no ingenuity can torture it into such a meaning.

When gentlemen think proper to submit their thoughts to public inspection, candour should pervade their sentiments. I am afraid this is not the case in Mr. Butler's pamphlet. I should be happy to ascribe deficiencies, on this head, to ignorance, rather than to an intended misrepresentation. But it would be an insult to decency and common sense to suppose, that any man who has received a liberal education should be ignorant of the genuine signification of a few plain Latin words. Mr. Butler, by his explanation of the words *hereticos persequar & impugnabo*, divests these formidable accents of their wonted terrors. According to the Doctor's commentary they very innocently mean, that every Bishop takes upon himself to be ever earnest in opposing

posing and refuting, by the spiritual weapons of the Gospel, all breachers of doctrines contrary to its principles. A school-boy could inform Doctor Butler that *persequar* and *impugnabo* have very different significations; that the former implies every species of torture, and every other bodily punishment; and that the latter, though generally applied to an opposition by argument, is as applicable to violent, though not excruciating measures, as the former. It is well known that the *humane Judges* of the *Inquisition* understood the words in this sense. Their comments, written in crimson characters, will fully shew how differently continental and insular Popish Doctors expound the learned languages. In Ireland we have little to fear from these formidable words, of such magical import as to have produced tragical scenes of carnage and massacre, whilst we can preserve our present happy Constitution in Church and State; but should Protestantism lose its present ascendancy, and Popery be established on its ruins, we would then, I fear, find, to our cost, that Mr. Butler and his suffragans (as he styles them) would not be altogether so moderate in their own commentaries, nor so hasty to condemn the tenets of their brethren—the Ultramontanists; but I hope that neither Ultramontanists or Intramontanists will ever have any ascendancy in this country—Irish Protestants are enemies to persecution—we want no revival of Smithfield tragedies.

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Mr. Butler's zeal, in the Papal cause, has induced him to forget not only his good breeding, but also his situation. Was it consistent with the politeness of a gentleman, to tell my Lord Bishop of Cloyne, that his arguments were false and unjust? Did such terms become a man in Mr. Butler's situation? But no zeal is productive of so frantic an intemperance as the Ecclesiastic, particularly when its basis is founded in bigotry and superstition.

If Mr. Butler and other Popish priests arrogate to themselves titles, and exercise functions contrary to laws still unrepealed, they should content themselves with the private possession, and not insult the Constitution by publicly assuming prelatical appellations. Mr. Butler, it is true, does not directly stile himself an Archbishop, but repeatedly talks of his suffragans, which is an indirect claim to that title, at the same time that it unequivocally dubs the men he alludes to with that of Bishop. This indiscretion he should be ashamed of, as it argues an equal degree of presumption and folly.

PHILO-CLERICUS.

